CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/1434
11 September 1996

Original: ENGLISH

WESTERN GROUP OBSERVATIONS ON THE FUTURE AGENDA OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

The 21 members of the Western Group would like to thank the Special Coordinator on the Review of the Agenda for the strenuous efforts he has made throughout the year in carrying out consultations on this complicated issue. His thoughtful report of 3 September and his informal oral report of 23 May to the CD provide a sound basis for further consultations to determine how the CD should take its work forward in 1997. We therefore welcome the proposal that the President of the CD should conduct consultations both now and during the intersessional period in order to produce a new substantive Agenda for the work of the CD. We lend our full support to all efforts aimed at producing a consensus within the CD.

The Western Group has taken note of the many statements and proposals made by delegations from all Groups during this session on the subject of the CD's Agenda. We encourage the President in consultation with all delegations to study and reflect on the ideas and proposals which have been brought forward. In this regard the Western Group wishes to contribute constructively to the process of consultations by making the following general observations:

The future CD Agenda

- The current CD Agenda requires reform and updating. As the Special Coordinator for the Agenda noted in his report of 23 May, "it is accepted that the CD should have a new Agenda that could boldly reflect the changes that have occurred and have been occurring in the world for some years now". In our view the Agenda should also reflect the progress made in disarmament and non-proliferation. We should aim to develop a new forward-looking and realistic Agenda which can attract consensus among the expanded CD.

- The Agenda should strike a balance between nuclear and conventional items. The focus should remain on substantive negotiations and discussions.

- Negotiations already endorsed by the CD should be pursued with the establishment of Ad Hoc Committees in 1997.

Agenda items and Ad Hoc Committees

- We recall that on 23 March 1995 the CD accepted the mandate for an Ad Hoc Committee to begin substantive negotiations on a fissile material cut-off convention. The CD also agreed on a candidate for the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee. Since then we have continued to urge the immediate commencement of these negotiations. We firmly believe that the Ad Hoc Committee should be established promptly.

- Ad Hoc Committees could be set up immediately on negative security assurances, outer space and transparency in armaments. The mandates for the Ad Hoc Committees could be updated.

- We fully support the Special Coordinator's conclusions, which seem to attract consensus, that certain items are outdated and accordingly should be revised or deleted. Other items could also be established.

- In this context two broad agenda items entitled "Nuclear Disarmament" and "Conventional Disarmament" could be established to reflect the need for balance in the Agenda.

- We have also taken note with interest of the remarks made by the Special Coordinator concerning anti-personnel landmines.

We look forward to working together with the President and all delegations of the CD in order to agree a new Agenda. The CD should remain flexible and open-minded, willing to address relevant issues in disarmament as appropriate.